

CHILD AS NARRATOR IN FICTIONAL DIARY: STYLISTIC ASPECT

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The article deals with the analysis of “Nelly Custis’ Diary” by the American author M.A. Bourne as the example of a fictional diary based on historical sources. It explores the genre of fictional diaries, focusing on the narrative style and language used when narrator is a child. It is defined that the genre, while rooted in real-life diaries, combines fiction and intimate first-person narration, offering readers a personal insight into events from the narrator’s subjective perspective. Diaries, both real and fictional, exhibit a fragmentary, non-linear style, emphasizing emotions, memories, and introspection. The research highlights the role of child narrators, particularly in fictional diaries based on historical documents, and emphasizes how their understanding of the world shapes their narration.

The study analyses the use of stylistic devices in a fictional diary detailing the life of George Washington’s step-granddaughter. Written from Nelly’s perspective at a young age, the diary reflects the simplicity and emotional immediacy of a child’s viewpoint. Bourne’s narrative incorporates ecphrasis, repetition, and questions-in-the-narrative, enumeration and parallelism which help convey Nelly’s feelings and perceptions such as excitement, joy, grief, as well as her observations of daily life. The narrative also includes ellipsis to create dramatic pauses, showing her reflective thinking. The analysis proves that simplicity of the diary in style is balanced by its emotional depth, allowing readers to connect with Nelly’s experience and see historical events through her eyes.

The study concludes that fictional diaries, particularly those with child narrators, offer valuable insights into historical periods by personalizing events. The child’s viewpoint is essential in conveying sincere emotions and uniqueness of their experience. Future research could expand on the linguistic and stylistic analysis of child narrators in both fictional and non-fictional diaries as well as studying the genre’s narrative potential.

Key words: *fictional diary, narrator, style, syntactic stylistic means, ecphrasis, repetition, question-in-the-narrative, parallelism, ellipsis.*

ДИТИНА ЯК НАРАТОР У ХУДОЖНЬОМУ ЩОДЕННИКУ: СТИЛІСТИЧНИЙ АСПЕКТ

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Стаття присвячена аналізу «Щоденника Неллі Кастіс» американської письменниці М.А. Борн як прикладу художнього щоденника, заснованого на історичних джерелах. Досліджується жанр художнього щоденника з огляду на стиль оповіді, коли наратором є дитина. Цей жанр, який походить із документальних щоденників, поєднує художній вимисел і оповідь від першої особи, пропонує читачам погляд на події із суб'єктивної перспективи оповідача. Визначено, що характеристикою щоденників, як реальних, так і вигаданих, є фрагментарний, нелінійний стиль, акцент на емоціях, спогадах і самоаналізі. У статті простежується роль дитини-оповідача в художньому щоденнику, заснованому на історичних документах, а також те, як розуміння світу дитиною формує оповідь.

Автор аналізує використання стилістичних засобів у художньому щоденнику, який описує життя прийомної онуки Джорджа Вашингтона. Написаний від імені Неллі в юному віці, щоденник відображає простоту й емоційну безпосередність дитячого погляду. Оповідь Н.А. Борн містить екфонеми, повтори, риторичні запитання, паралелізми, які допомагають передати почуття та сприйняття Неллі, зокрема хвилювання, радість, горе, а також її повсякденні спостереження. В оповіді також наявні еліпси для створення драматичних пауз, що увиразнює роздуми наратора. Аналіз доводить, що простота стилю щоденника врівноважується його емоційною глибиною, дозволяє читачам відчувати досвід Неллі та побачити історичні події її очима.

У статті зроблено висновок про те, що художні щоденники, особливо ті, де оповідачами є діти, допомагають зрозуміти різні історичні періоди завдяки особистісному сприйняттю подій. Погляд дитини є важливим для передачі щирих емоцій тону й унікальності її досвіду. Напрями майбутніх досліджень можуть включати лінгвостилістичний аналіз образу дітей-оповідачів на різних рівнях як у художніх, так і в документальних щоденниках, а також з'ясування наративного потенціалу жанру художнього щоденника.

Ключові слова: *художній щоденник, наратор, стиль, синтаксичні стилістичні засоби, екфонема, повтор, риторичне запитання, паралелізм, еліпс.*

Formulation of the problem. Documentary and autodocumentary prose have been popular genres of non-fiction for many years. Following them, a fictional diary has gained popularity as the genre that combines fictional account of events and intimacy of the first-person narration. N. Borysenko says that not losing its primary meaning, the diary entered the sphere of literature and became the model for a work of fiction with the original aesthetic setting [1, p. 7] supporting the idea by C. Delafield that diary fiction takes from actual diaries a range of received conventions and both exploits and interrogates them [10, p. 48]. A. Benia believes that the diary enriches the narrative and gives it more nuance to portray the flimsy nature of memories and the individual subjectivities. This structural analysis not only gives insight into private memory and, thus, reconstructs the self and the past, but it also makes the whole narrative a beautiful collection of intimate [8, p. 10]. Thus, novel written in the form of a diary has a special appeal to the readers as it creates the impression that the character reveals some secrets only to them and nobody else. The centre of a diary, documentary or fictional, is the narrator, the one who speaks and tells the story, who allows the reader to see the events from the subjective point of view. The reader learns the narrator's experience, that is why, in our opinion, one of the aspects that are of particular interest, is the narrator's age and the way it manifests itself through language and style of a diary under analysis. This research deals with the analysis of child as narrator in a fictional diary based on historical documents.

Research analysis. Though the genre of a diary has a long tradition in literature fictional diaries as a genre is relatively new. It is one of the reasons why attempts to research it with reference to its language and style specificity are not frequent. The researchers mostly tend to analyse diaries of public people, their themes and genre features. Though, as O. Medved states, there is necessity to develop linguistic approaches to the study of modern non-fiction prose that is termed as ego-text or ego-document, and the reason is in linguistics and literary studies there is neither their theoretical understanding, no unanimity to use them for different genres and genre forms [5]. This opinion is supported by Y. Kulinska, O. Koval, O. Redkina and N. Gerasimenko who state that literary critics face the need for a clearer definition of the genre nature of the diary, the relations between the addressee and the author, the chronotope, functions, classification, and finally determination of the place of the diary in the general system of literary genres [13, p. 24].

One of the main characteristics of a diary, whether it is a fictional or non-fictional one, is its fragmentary character. the narration goes in chronological order though there can be leaps in one or several days and weeks. The narration is often combined with description and sharing feelings and emotions. The researches single out these characteristics of a diary noting the intercalated mode of composition where the writing process is situated between the events of an ongoing story [12, p. 106]. A. Erten seconds this opinion stating that the author of a diary is at liberty to apply any form and mind style according to his/her point of view [11, p. 11]. N. Izotova states that fragmentary character of a diary is manifested in nonsystematic recording of events, impressions

and emotions, nonlinear narration, violation of causality [3, p. 94]. Diaries are texts characterised by fragmentation, nonlinearity, violation of cause-and-effect relationships, intertextuality, autoreflexia, a combination of documentary and artistic principles, fundamental incompleteness and lack of a single idea [13, p. 24]. According to O. Matveieva, the reader perceives the fragments as the whole, sees the connection between fragments [4, p. 46] and every fragment keeps to the main storyline.

Noting the fragmentary nature of a diary Sekou Cherif points out that the narrator is the focal point in the text: as diary is a form of “dated fragment”, restoring external or intimate events, introspection, hence, the expression of the writer’s feelings is kept in the foreground, and the feelings carry the semantic load of emotion, affectivity and their contrasts [14, p. 222]. We find the same opinion in the research by I. Kholiavko who states that as the author is the one who “holds” the text, everything in the diary of a particular author is individual, everything is the “author’s image”. The pragmatic potential of a diary entry is its volume, selection of content, the author’s way of organizing textual space, sequences of presentation of impressions; it determines the functional and semantic type of microtext (narration, description, reasoning) or its fragments, and in general, the individual author’s style and linguistic features of the entries [6, p. 79]. Thus, we believe that it is necessary to move from the general study of the style of a diary to study of the narrator and his/her style.

Still the works dedicated to the study of linguistic and stylistic aspects of a diary and its narrator are not numerous. We can find thoughts about the language of a diary in the article by S. Ignatieva who writes that the main pragmatic units of a diary text are egocentric and expressive lexical units, questions in the narrative, question-answer patterns, address to oneself, means of constructing autodiologue that realize the main function of autocommunication [2, p. 42]. If the diary is written by a child narrator there is a difference between what is told and what is understood and this leads to double layers in narration as perception and narration styles vary between child and adult due to mental and psychological differences, when an adult writer narrates a story to adults disguising in a child’s mind and point of view, they know that adults comprehend what that child narrator cannot comprehend yet [7, p. 149]. That is why senses and intuitions are prevalent in child’s narration and if adult authors write fictional diaries from the child’s point of view this is the main rule they have to follow and observe child’s way of thinking and perception. The language and style of such diaries are plain and simple, yet the choice of lexical units, grammatical and syntactic structures require thorough analysis as they are constituent parts of the narrator’s characteristics.

The purpose of the article. We second the opinion of H. Bayrak Akyildiz that child narrators make us think more on the child’s position in the society and its difference from the adult one as children have different takes on the society’s identity schemes and values and this leads to a different positioning, and thus a different use of language [7, p. 150]. Children’s diaries, fictional or non-fictional, provide the valuable insight into lives of young members of the society whether in past or present. Hence the purpose of the article is to define the specificity of child’s narration in the fictional diary

performing the analysis of the expressive means and stylistic devices used in “Nelly Custis’ Diary” by M.A. Bourne. This fictional diary is one of many other diaries written by the American writer aimed at shoving definite historical periods through the perception of real people, children and grandchildren of famous historical personalities, participants of the historic events, thus making the events closer and more personal to the readers.

Results and discussion. “Nelly Custis’ Diary” by Mary Ann Bourne is an example of a fictional diary based on documentary sources. Nelly Custis is a step-granddaughter of George Washington raised by him as his daughter. Mary Ann Bourne uses the form of a diary to show life in the president’s household through the eyes of a little girl who is only ten when the diary begins. The diary is based on Nelly’s letters to her friend Elizabeth Bordley, George Washington’s diaries, Martha Washington’s letters and recollections of Washington’s surrounding. Thus, we conclude that “Nelly Custis’ Diary” combines features of a documentary diary and a fictional diary. A Erten states that in fictional diaries the authors especially use simple sentence structures to reflect the style of the child narrator [11, p. 11] and this is true for the text under analysis. The style of “Nelly Custis’ Diary” is simple reflecting naïve observation of a little girl and among limited use of stylistic devices syntax stands prominent as means of expressing the narrator’s feelings and emotions.

Ecphonesis (exclamation) is the most productive syntactic means in the diary. Different types of exclamatory sentences are used to convey the range of Nelly’s emotions.

*“Grandpapa’s temperature is gone. **Halleluia!**”* [9, p. 24] – joy of the little girl when her grandfather is better after a dangerous illness.

*“**Misery! Misery!** A fortnight ago a summer cold flew with the window with my name upon it”* [9, p. 62] – Nelly’s despair when she falls ill.

*“I am taking music lessons from Mr. Reinagle. He is a demanding teacher. **Our old spinet is to be replaced by a pianoforte!**”* [9, p. 24] – Nelly’s excitement and anticipation when she is going to master a new instrument.

*“Mr. Lear took Wash and me to the theater to see “The speaking Figure”. **Mr. Wingall, the principal actor, kissed my hand!**”* [9, p. 28] – Nelly’s excitement caused by new experience of being greeted as President’s granddaughter.

*His portrait is being painted by Mr. Peale and three of his brothers. **What an artistic family!*** [9, p. 74] – emphatic construction is used to express Nelly’s wonder at the fact that there are several artists in the family of Charles Willson Peale, the famous American painter.

There are also examples of combining ecphonesis and capitalization to express Nelly’s strong positive emotions:

*“Congress has adjourned, and before it reconvenes in Philadelphia, **WE ARE GOING TO MOUNT VERNON!**”* [9, p. 34] – happiness when Nelly learns that the family is going to spend summer in her beloved childhood home.

*“**GOLDEN DAY!** Cupid, a small mischievous urchin, has taken me by surprise”* [9, p. 102] – happiness when Nelly realizes she is in love.

Ecphonesis is combined with the change of print (italics) to emphasize emotions:

“Something astonishing happened. Harriot’s brother, George Steptoe Washington, has been married secretly to Lucy Payne, who is fifteen!” [9, p. 55] – shock when Nelly realizes how young her relative’s bride is.

*“We shall celebrate Grandpapa’s birthdate this year with a wedding. **I am to be Mrs. Lawrence Lewis!**”* [9, p. 104] – Nelly’s great excitement and happiness when she is about to get married.

Another productive syntactic means is repetition. There are several types of repetition in the diary, the most frequent is ordinary repetition.

*“Grandpapa may die. I cannot keep from tears I am so **frightened**. Grandmama is **frightened** too. She sits tight-lipped by Grandpapa’s bed”* [9, p. 31] – repetition emphasizes Nelly’s feelings when George Washington becomes seriously ill and all members of the family fear for his life.

*“The Anti-Federalists are violently opposed to the treaty and stoned **poor, poor** Mr. Hamilton when he tried to speak in favor of it”* [9, p. 68] – contact repetition is used to show the little girl’s regret when she thinks that that Alexander Hamilton, her Grandpapa’s friend, is treated unfairly by his political rivals.

*“Grandpapa rode over his farms for five hours yesterday in a northeast wind carrying snow, **then** hail, **then** rain and more snow”* [9, p. 111] – repetition of adverb “then” expressed Nelly’s irritation at bad and changing weather.

Framing repetition is used to emphasize Nelly’s grief when she loses her Grandpapa and Grandmama in two years as well as her determination to stay strong for her family in her new status of a married lady and mother:

*“**I must conquer my grief**. A dear husband and two precious babies await my care and concern. Another child is on the way. **I must conquer my grief**”* [9, p. 115].

In the diary we found an example of antimetabole when the words are repeated in reverse order. It is used to express Nelly’s unhappiness and misery when her strict Grandmama makes her practice the pianoforte for hours:

*“Grandmama makes me practice for hours on end so I will satisfy Mr. Reinagle. **I play and cry and cry and play**”* [9, p. 46].

One more productive syntactic stylistic means is question-in-the-narrative, a question that is asked and answered by one and the same person. It is used when the narrator questions things and expresses doubts and concerns.

*“They have a big garden with apple trees. It made me long for Mount Vernon. **When will Congress adjourn so we can go home for a time?**”* [9, p. 32] – little Nelly is eager to go home as soon as possible and the question expresses her impatience.

*“Grandmama told Mrs. Powel that when I have a little gravity, I will be a good girl. **I wonder if Mrs. Powel and Grandmama were ever fifteen years old?**”* [9, p. 64] – Nelly is frustrated that her Grandmama and her friend Mrs. Powel consider her too wild for a well-behaved young lady and wonders if they forgot that they were children too.

*“I expect Betsey is happy to have found a husband. **Am I to be a Spinster?**”* [9, p. 76] – when Nelly’s sister marries she feels doubt that she herself will find a husband as she does not have romantic feelings yet.

In “Nelly Custis’ Diary” we observe usage of enumeration:

“Mrs. Graham’s school teaches **reading, English literature, spelling, grammar, writing, arithmetic, French, and geography** <...> I shall also study **embroidery, plainwork and clothwork**” [9, p. 28] – Nelly is excited about her new school where she will be taught many subjects, much more than her sisters learn with their private tutors.

“Wash and I have **run** down the hills, **climbed** our favourite apple trees, **raced** along the serpentine walks, **played** touch-wood and hide-and-seek **in the groves, the shrubberies, and the wilderness, played** leapfrog on the bowling green, **jumped** over the Ha! Ha! <...> and **clanged** the bell in the drying yard” [9, p. 37] – homogeneous predicates in the sentence are used to emphasize how happy and excited Nelly and her brother wash are when they arrive home and spend time playing and enjoying their freedom after living in the President’s mansion.

“Our daytimes are also a nightmare. A mob of people surrounds the President’s Mansion, **huzzahing, demanding** war against England, **cursing** my dear Grandpapa, **crying** for success to the French” [9, p. 56] – Nelly describes chaos in Philadelphia when the angry mob gathered near the President’s mansion demanding support of the French revolution.

Enumeration is combined with parallelism when Nelly describes her beloved childhood home, Mount Vernon estate, as an idyllic place where she enjoys all sounds and smells:

“I swing for hours in the swing that has been hung in a tall oak tree and listen to the sounds of the plantation: **the low voices and soft laughter from the spinning house, the sawing of lumber, the slap of paint brush, the chopping of ice blocks in the ice-house, the tap of the shoemaker’s hammer**” [9, p. 44]

“It rained last night, and the vegetable garden smells **of damp earth, onions and chives, rosemary, thyme, savory, and rue**. Mount Vernon is alive with smells this hot and humid day – **smoked meat in the smokehouse, lye in the wash house, horses in the stable, and mules in the paddock**. I can even smell **the honey in the beehives**” [9, p. 50]

In the diary we also observe a particular use of ellipsis for creating a dramatic pause in the text when another thought is introduced.

“Harriot didn’t weep <...> not when we could see her” [9, p. 19] – characterizing her cousin Harriot Washington Nelly thinks of her as a person who can control her feelings but at the same time she admits that Harriot can cry when she is alone.

“The President is no king <...> but he must comport himself in an admirable manner” [9, p. 23] – noting her impressions of life in the President’s family Nelly supports the idea that the Head of State is not king but he is expected to show dignity and manners that make everybody respect the office.

“Today I am nineteen <...> and as yet not engaged” [9, p. 95] – Nelly’s thoughts on her birthday reflect her concern typical of a young lady of her social status that she might not find a suitable match and remain unmarried.

Conclusion. Having analysed “Nelly Custis’ Diary” by Mary Ann Bourne we come to the conclusion that it is a fictional interpretation based on documentary evidence. The form of a diary is pertinent as it provides the reader with the insight into George Washington’s life and times through perception of his step-granddaughter thus making the narration intimate and personal. As it is a little girl’s writing the simple narrative incorporates limited stylistic means to convey her emotions and impressions among which syntactic means such as ecphrasis, repetition, enumeration, parallelism, questions-in-the-narrative are prominent. We envision research opportunities in conducting a more in-depth analysis of language and style of the diary, comparing child narrators in fictional diaries and documentary diaries, and exploring the stylistic techniques used at different levels in both fictional and non-fictional diaries, along with their respective functions.

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